

Application No. 10/708,315
Response to Office Action of April 18, 2006
Response Dated June 9, 2006

REMARKS

This Amendment responds to the final Office Action mailed April 18, 2006.

Claims 1-8 remain pending in the application and stand rejected. Claim 1 has been amended, and new claims 13 and 14 have been added.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner, Alicia A. Chevalier, for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative, David W. Dorton, during the personal interview conducted June 1, 2006. During the interview, the claims were discussed with respect to the references of record, and Applicant's representative presented proposed claim amendments to more sharply distinguish the claims over the references of record, as discussed more fully below. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the personal interview and the following remarks.

Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,899,363 to Dry. Claim 1 is directed to a non-padded automotive interior trim assembly, and has been amended herein to recite:

a rigid substrate member forming at least part of a structural support of the trim assembly and including a least one target area for providing a soft feel to the trim assembly;

a plurality of apertures formed in said substrate member within said target area; and

a flexible skin disposed directly contacting upon said substrate member, at least proximate said target area, said skin having a uniform thickness extending across said apertures in said target area.

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Support for this amendment can be found in the Application with reference to paragraph 0019 and the drawings. Specifically, paragraph 0019 states:

In the embodiments depicted in FIGS. 1, 2, and 2A, skin layer 22 extends across apertures 24, 24a. It will be recognized, however, that the material forming the skin layer 22 may alternatively fill, or partially fill, some or all of the apertures 24, 24a, as depicted in FIG. 2B.

Figures 1, 2 and 2A, therefore depict embodiments wherein a skin layer 22 has a uniform thickness that extends across apertures 24, 24a in the target area. Accordingly, Applicants assert that no new matter has been added by this amendment to claim 1.

Applicants further assert that amended claim 1 is not taught or suggested by Dry '363. Specifically, Dry '363 does not teach or suggest a flexible skin disposed on a substrate member wherein the skin has a substantially uniform thickness extending across the apertures in the target area of the substrate, as required by amended claim 1. Rather, Dry '363 is directed to a method of forming a vehicle trim component wherein pins are provided in different mold cavities to form apertures through both a rigid substrate 42 and a relatively softer skin layer 52. The skin layer 52, therefore, does not have a uniform thickness extending across the target area, as a result of the holes created by the pins. For at least this reason, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1 over Dry '363 be withdrawn.

Claims 2-8 each depend from independent claim 1, and are therefore in condition for allowance for at least the reasons stated above for claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claim 2-8 over Dry '363 be withdrawn.

New Claims

New claims 13 and 14 have been added by this amendment. Claim 13 is similar to claim 1, but recites that the flexible skin has an outer surface that is "devoid of apertures between said substrate member and said outer surface." Claim 14 is similar to claim 1, but recites that the substrate has a first thickness, and the flexible skin has "a second thickness less than said first thickness," as suggested by the Examiner during the personal interview on June 1, 2006. Support for claims 13 and 14 can be found in the Application with reference to the originally filed drawings. Accordingly, Applicants assert that no new matter has been added by new claims 13 and 14. See, MPEP §2163(II)(A)(3)(a) (an applicant may show possession of an invention by disclosure of drawings or structural or chemical formulas that are sufficiently detailed to show that applicant was in possession of the claimed invention as a whole); MPEP §2163.06 (information contained in any one of the specification, claims or drawings of the application as filed may be added to any other part of the application without introducing new matter).

Applicants further assert that new claims 13 and 14 are not taught or suggested by Dry '363, or any other reference of record. Specifically, Dry '363 does not teach or suggest a flexible skin that is devoid of apertures between the substrate member and an outer surface of the skin, as required by claim 13. Rather, Dry '363 is directed to a method of forming a vehicle trim component wherein pins are provided in different mold cavities to form apertures through both a rigid substrate 42 and a relatively softer skin layer 52, as discussed above. Dry '363 also fails to teach or suggest a flexible skin that has a thickness that is less than the thickness of the substrate member, as required by

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claim 14. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request early and favorable indication of allowance with respect to new claims 13 and 14.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments to the claims and the remarks set forth herein, Applicants respectfully believe this case is in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. If the Examiner believes any matter requires further discussion, the Examiner is respectfully asked to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the matter may be promptly resolved. The Examiner's prompt attention to this matter is appreciated.

Applicants are of the opinion that no fee is due as a result of this communication. However, if any such fee is due, please apply such fees or credits necessary to complete this communication to Deposit Account No. 23-3000.

Respectfully submitted,

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